

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF: H.B. 6374 - An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses

PRESENTED TO: The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

DATE: March 2, 2021

SUBMITTED BY: James Hagani, Woodbridge, CT

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is James Hagani. My family and I live in (and love) our wonderful state of Connecticut. Connecticut is the beautiful place it is in large part because of the tireless efforts of our legislators like you. So before anything else, please accept my sincere gratitude.

I am reaching out to you today to express not only my strong support for House Bill 6374, but specifically its provision requiring campus climate surveys be conducted every two years.

Like every parent with children currently in college, there is not a single day or night that goes by that I don't worry about their well-being. During the college selection process, we, as parents, take into consideration an array of factors. At the top of our list is, of course, our children's safety.

HB 6374 is a crucial and significant step towards better protecting our children. As I'm sure has been thoroughly discussed, it will provide colleges and current students throughout Connecticut with detailed and relevant data that each can use to identify and address rampant sexual violence on their campus. Those are hugely important benefits in and of themselves. But because the survey results will be public, they will also better inform parents. And not just those like me with kids in college, but also parents contemplating where to send their kids. This creates a huge incentive for colleges to tackle these "hidden" problems head-on because the surveys will, once and for all, shed an inescapable light on the true nature of the problem.

Now please consider the many ramifications of whether the survey is done every two years versus every four years.

Take for example the most concerning type of college: one with relatively poor survey results. Realizing it will have a direct and adverse impact on applications and admissions, the school will be incentivized to take corrective action. But if the next survey is only two years away, the institution will need to act promptly and decisively in order for it to expect better survey results by the next one.

Furthermore, if surveys are biennial instead of every four years, it also means that a school that has undertaken substantive positive steps does not have to languish for the remainder of those long four years before it can free itself from the dark cloud of a now outdated survey.

Parents will greatly benefit from the biennial survey requirement as well. We recognize that these surveys are a snapshot of a moment in time, but by mandating that they can never be more than two years old, you can ensure that we will always have reasonably current and therefore reliable information to help us in our decision. Just imagine: your foresight today will allow parents less than ten years from now to use the four of five surveys that will have been done by then to actually assess trends and therefore judge schools not only on where they currently are, but as importantly, in which direction and with what speed they are heading.

Colleges are now rated on everything from the quality of their professors to the quality of their food. It is long overdue that they also be judged on the most important aspect of quality of life on campus - student safety. HB 6374 will finally make that happen. I beg you: do not undercut its impact and utility: please demand that schools conduct biennial surveys.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

- James Hagani, Woodbridge Connecticut